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Canada then and now.

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CANADA

THEN AND NOW

BY

WILLIAM RENWICK RIDDELL, LL.D.,

With the Compliments of

WILLIAM RENWICK RIDDELL.

An Analysis of
Dr. John Strachan's Arithmetic

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OCT 7 1935
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

Reprinted from the "Proceedings of the Fifty-Fifth Annual Convention of the Ontario Educational Association, 1916."

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WILLIAM RENWICK RIDDELL, LL.D.,
F. R. Hist. Soc., Etc.,
Justice of the Supreme Court of Ontario

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Hon. Mr. Justice Riddell: Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, when I was asked by Mr. Doan to address this Association during the present meeting, I cast about in my mind for a subject upon which to frame something in the way of an address: and with that caution which I have learned from having been on the bench nearly ten years and at the bar more than twice as long, I selected a subject which would enable me to swing around a bit in case I found it necessary to change the line which I might fix upon in the first instance. Therefore, I told my friend Mr. Doan, that I should speak on the subject "Canada, Then and Now." Of course you understand I could give an address (as I have done in this hall before) on the conduct of Canadians in the war one hundred years ago and in the war going on at the present time: I could draw comparisons between the civilization then, one hundred years ago, and now: I might, if some reverend doctor were not on the platform with me, even venture to say something about theology one hundred years ago and at the present time. But when I was turning the matter over in my mind, I came across a little book (which I had never seen before) in the Public Reference Library, which brought back into play the old schoolmaster instinct. They say that Coleridge once said to his friend: "Did you ever hear me preach?" "Why," says his friend, "I never heard you do anything else." So in the same way, my friends, some of them, say that the old schoolmaster instinct will show itself, the old schoolmaster peculiarities will exhibit themselves in my conduct from time to time, and, as the Chairman has just said, I remain a schoolmaster at heart.

Over forty-seven years ago—before most of you were born, before the parents of some of you were born—I went out to teach a public school in the new part of the Township of Haldimand. I taught that public school and I have taught every kind of school that you can think of, the small, local, rural public school, the larger graded village school, the large town school, the Collegiate Institute, the Normal School and I have even gone so far as to teach in the Universities, in the faculties of law

and medicine and arts. (I have not yet been dignified by a chair or lectureship in Theology but perhaps that will come later on.) I thought I should prepare a paper based somewhat on that little school book.

Now, I am sorry for some of my friends that I see here. I know that the caption, " Canada, Then and Now " is taking, and I daresay some of my friends who are here expect something entirely different from me; and I am really sorry for them if they have been induced to come here by false pretences. That would, however, just be on a par with the enthusiastic student of Burns and his poems, who saw advertised "the celebrated Dr. Thompson's work on Burns, $5.00 "; he sent for it and got by return of mail, " Burns and Scalds and Their Treatment, by John Henry Thompson, M.D., M.R.C.S." If they be disappointed, they will have to bear with me for a short time—I shall not detain them very long. I supposed that I was to address a body of teachers, schoolmasters—and those, who, are more important not only in numbers but also in significance, schoolmistresses—and therefore my paper is more or less—sometimes more and sometimes less—of a technical character.

In 1799 a young Scotsman—if it be lawful to call an Aberdonian a Scotsman—left his home, and on the last day of the year arrived at Kingston, in the new Province of Upper Canada, a Province which was then but just eight years old. He probably had little thought that in the course of time he would become the first Anglican Bishop of Toronto and one of the most prominent and powerful politicians in Upper Canada.

The first Lieutenant-Governor, John Graves Simcoe, had contemplated the erection of an Academy which should grow into a College under the care of the Government of the Province. The celebrated Dr. Chalmers was offered the position of Principal of the proposed institution; he refused, as did another of less note, and at length it was offered to John Strachan, who was teaching the Parish School at Kettle. Eighty pounds sterling per annum, free board and lodging, and all the travelling expenses to the new land paid, proved an irresistible lure. The young man of twenty-one, graduate in Arts of King's College, Aberdeen, a divinity student, could not but accept.

But matters were sadly different when he arrived in the colony from what had been expected. Simcoe had gone home, the Academy scheme had fallen to the ground, and the best the young immigrant could do was to become tutor in the family of the Honorable Richard Cartwright, a prominent merchant of Kingston, Member of the Legislative Council, who had been Judge of the District Court of that District when it was the District of Mecklenburg and before Upper Canada was born—a man of great ability, inflexible integrity and unassuming piety, whose grandsons in our day—Sir Richard Cartwright, James S. Cartwright (both now dead), and John R. Cartwright (still with us), have proved themselves worthy descendants of a worthy ancestor.

In 1800, Strachan opened a private school at Kingston, and shortly thereafter took orders in the Church of England. His mother was and remained a Presbyterian of the Relief Church; but his father had been a Dissenter and an adherent of the Episcopal Church of Scotland. His father died when Strachan was six years old and the lad accompanied his mother to her Church, but he was never ordained; so it is not fair to charge him (as has sometimes been done) with unfaithfulness to his Church or to his vows.

He was appointed Rector of the Church at Cornwall by the Lieutenant-Governor, Peter Hunter, in 1803, and at once entered upon his duties there.

But the schoolmaster instinct was not dead—indeed, it died only with him. His clerical work was comparatively light, and he began taking pupils. Before long he established the Academy at Cornwall at which were educated so many men of renown in our early history, a school characterized by the thoroughness of its training and the high sense of duty and patriotism which it imparted to its pupils. That the training was narrow, the patriotism that of the High Tory, was not a blemish in the eyes of the schoolmaster or of most of his patrons. I would not have it supposed that he excluded, or attempted to proselytise when admitted, students of another creed—the Presbyterian McLean and the Roman Catholic Macdonell were as welcome and as unmolested in their religion as the Anglican Robinson.

The Parliament of Upper Canada had carefully provided for law courts, law and juries, gaols and courthouses, militia, excise and tavern licences, weights and measures, the value of

coins, tolls to be taken by millers, municipal officers, assessment and taxes (for taxes, like death, are inevitable), roads and statute labour, the registration of deeds and other instruments of title, wages for legislators, the practice of law and of medicine.

It had even provided—the first British country to do so, the second country in all the world—for the abolition of slavery. But it had not provided for the abolition of illiteracy. It had provided bounties for the destruction of bears and wolves, none for the destruction of ignorance, a worse enemy than any wild beast of the forest; horned cattle, horses, sheep and swine were not allowed to run at large, but the child was, so far as any public provision was made for him.

To us in this democratic age, the perusal of the correspondence, etc., dealing with the aspirations as to education expressed by those in authority in the early days of Upper Canada, leaves a bad taste in the mouth. Most, if not all, had in view Grammar Schools, "a provision for the education of the rising generation who must take their due lead in society," "that the rising generation may be brought up competently learned and properly embued with religion and loyalty"—"religion" being identical with the teachings of the Church of England, "loyalty" with High Tory principles.

There was from the beginning an effort on the part of the rulers to establish at public expense what we would call secondary schools, and a University—the common school for the common child was as little thought of as in England—and there was also from the beginning a more or less quiet resistance to this scheme, although the objectors do not seem to have formulated their proposals definitely.

In one case only was any poor child provided for by legislation. In the same year as Strachan arrived in Canada, the Legislature enacted a law directing that children orphaned or abandoned should be apprenticed by two Magistrates until they should be of the age of twenty-one if male, eighteen if female—the practice made familiar to us all by "Oliver Twist."

In that state of affairs, private schools were opened in various parts of the Province, of various degrees of excellence and with various curricula. Those who are interested will find a reasonably full account in Dr. Hodgins' "Documentary History of

Education in Upper Canada" in the first volume (now rare) of that interesting and valuable series.

As with schools, so with school books; there were few of any kind and none prescribed.

Strachan was forced to compile text books for his pupils, amongst them one on arithmetic, which was afterwards printed in Montreal by Nahum Mower, a well-known printer of the time. The volume is a 12mo of 214 pages, bound in calf, with title page as follows: "A / Concise Introduction to a Practical Arithmetic: / For the use of / Schools / By the Rev. John Strachan / Rector of Cornwall, Upper-Canada / Montreal / Printed by Nahum Mower / 1809." It is exceedingly rare: I have seen only one copy, that in the Toronto Public Library.

In the preface the reverend author tells of the genesis of his book, lays it "down as a principle that no boy can do anything right the first time, but that he must learn by the help of his Teacher, so as to be able to do it himself ever after," and gives his method of teaching arithmetic: "I divide my Pupils into separate Classes according to their progress. Each Class have one or more sums to produce every day, neatly wrought out upon their Slates. The work is carefully examined, after which I command every figure to be blotted out and the sums to be wrought out under my eye. The one whom I happen to pitch upon first, gives with an audible voice the rules and reasons for every step, and as he proceeds, the rest silently work along with him, figure for figure, but ready to correct him if he blunder that they may get his place. As soon as this one is finished, the work is again blotted out and another called upon to work the question a loud (sic) as before while the rest again proceed along with him in silence, and so on round the whole Class. By this method the principles are fixed in the mind, and he must be a very dull Boy indeed who does not understand every question thoroughly before he leave (sic) it. . . such a plan is certainly very laborious but it will be found successful, and he that is anxious to save labour ought not to be a public Teacher." (With that conception of the "public Teacher" everyone must agree.) He does not seem to have used a blackboard and indeed such a thing was then unheard of.

The Arithmetic starts off with the figures, the nine significant figures and the " cypher." The " English " Notation is employed, in which a billion is a million millions, a trillion a million billions, etc. This was an alternative method of notation in my school days, about half way between 1809 and the present; but the " French " Notation had driven it out in practice.

A synopsis of the Roman Notation follows, the use of the inverted C being not too clearly explained. Then comes Simple Addition, with the time honoured method of proof by cutting off the top addend, adding the others, and to the sum adding the omitted line. I remember about fifty-five or six years ago the " new Master " announcing with a flourish of trumpets the " new discovery " of proving addition by adding downwards. This was considered little short of blasphemy by those of us who had learned the old method of proof. We had practised it surreptitiously ourselves, many of us, but, to call it " proof"! His merits in other respects entitled the new teacher to respect, but this was a hard matter to get over.

Compound Addition is the next " Rule "; the author says in the preface " There is a difference of opinion among teachers as to the order of Teaching the Primary rules, some giving the simple and then returning to the compound, others Teaching both at once. I have been in the habit of giving all the simple rules to young Pupils before they proceeded to the compound, but to young men of discernment, I have seldom found it necessary, as they commonly understand the compound with as much facility as the simple." This gives an illuminating sidelight on the state of education in those days of voluntaryism—young men of discernment learning simple addition as a matter of course.

The hundredweight was 112 pounds, as it still was in my day in weighing potash. It was when I was a lad at school that the text book caught up with the fact, and the hundredweight became in the class as in business, 100 pounds (potash was excepted); but we still revelled in the " cwt " " qr " " lb ", " cuts quers and libs " as we called them—when the master was not within hearing.

The pupil was taught that jewelers divided the Troy grain into 20 mites, the mite into 24 droits, the droit into 20 periots, and the periot into 24 blanks—and in truth the Long Parlia-

ment did, July 17th, 1649, say "Twelve ounces makes a pound weight Troy; Twenty Peny weight makes an ounce; Twenty-four Grains makes a peny weight; Twenty Mites makes a Grain; Twenty-four Droits makes a Mite; Twenty Perits makes a Droit. Twenty-four Blanks makes a Perit"—as the quaint old black-letter volume of "Henry Scobell Esq.; Clerk of the Parliament . . . printed by Henry Mills and John Field, Printers to His Highness the Lord Protector, 1658" informs all who wish to know. "Perits" "Peryottes," and "Periots" are all one—but I confess I never heard of them till I read Strachan's Arithmetic.

In Cloth Measure appear the Nail, the Flemish Ell, the English Ell and the French Ell, dear to my boyhood but long since disappeared from the text-book, as from commerce still earlier.

In Long Measure three barleycorns made one inch—twelve lines it was in my day—and the Rod retained, as it did sixty years after in the book, the alternative of Pole or Perch. I never was reconciled to the 16½ foot "Pole"; the only pole used in practice being fifteen feet long, and employed in laying off the "furs" for the ploughmen. 69½ statute miles made one degree: this was reduced in my day to 69 1/7 miles; Bessell's computations were not available till 1838. Our modern arithmetics scorn to give the pupil any information upon this important subject.

A table is given of French Long Measure, necessary at that time, as many measurements on the left bank of the Detroit and St. Lawrence were given in French measure—"6 feet equals 1 toise; 3 toises equals 1 perch; 10 perches equals 1 arpent; 84 arpents equals 1 league." One thousand French feet equals 1,068 English feet, and the French league is 308 feet (English) longer than the English league.

The distinction between the Ale and Beer Gallon of 282 cubic inches and the Wine (or Winchester) Gallon of 231 was kept up, our present gallon, the Imperial Gallon of 277¼, not yet having been heard of. The Firkin, Kilderkin, Butt and Tun of Ale or Beer, the Tierce and Pipe of Wine have now all disappeared from the Arithmetic as the materials themselves seem destined soon to disappear from the country.

In Dry Measure the Pottle was two Quarts, 8 Bushels one Quarter as it is yet in the English wheat market, 5 Quarters a

Wey or Load, 2 Weys a Last, and 4 Bushels a Coomb—all but the Coomb in existence in my arithmetical days (i.e., in theory). So in Wool Weight, 7 pounds made one Clove, two Cloves one Stone, 2 Stones one Tod, 6½ Tods one Wey, and 2 Weys one Sack, all familiar but all vanished now.

A measure common then but long obsolete in this Province was the Minot of Canada; 96 French solid Inches made one Pot of Paris, and 20 Pots one Minot, a little (8¾ per cent.) larger than the Winchester bushel.

Why the reverend author inserted in a practical School Arithmetic, Tables of Hebrew, Roman and Greek Money, Weights and Measures may be left to conjecture, but the usefulness of the table of the values of gold and silver coins current in British America no one can question. Canada had no coinage of its own: it had current English guineas, half guineas, quarter guineas, crowns and shillings, Portugese Johannes (Joes), half-Johannes (Half-Joes) and moidores, Spanish doubloons, half doubloons, dollars and pistarenes, French Louis d'or, pistoles, dollars, pieces of 4½ livres, 36 sols (sous) and 21 sols, as well as American eagles, half eagles and dollars. All had their statutory value, not always the same as their current value.

The French computation of money was in vogue on the St. Lawrence and Detroit, appearing sometimes even in the Courts, and the table is given; "12 denier or 2 farthing make 1 sol; 20 sols or 10 pence make 1 livre; 24 livres or 20 shillings make 1 Louis or pound." Note that "sol" is the modern "sou"—in modern French the letter "u" often takes the place of the earlier "l". All above middle age will remember the Lower Canadian "sou" and "deux sous" pieces, which passed for a halfpenny (or copper) and a penny respectively; and the livre was about what the franc is to-day.

The Federal or American money table is the same as to-day with the same values; the Canadian (Halifax, Quebec or Provincial) currency was considered 9/10 the value of sterling, which was a little high. When we come to "Exchange" further remarks will be made concerning the money of the period.

Passing over the Rules, Simple and Compound Subtraction, Multiplication and Division, which call for no special remark. and also "Bills of Parcels" which is notable as giving forms of

accounts to be rendered by merchants and of receipts, promissory notes, etc., we come to "Proportion."

It is quite plain that the author did not know what proportion really is. His definition of the "Rule" is odd enough: "Simple Proportion teaches to find a fourth from three given numbers"; but his "General Rule" is indicative of a misunderstanding of the true significance of Proportion and Ratio. "Place that number for the second term which is of the same name with the number sought. Consider whether more or less be required by the question—if more, place the less of the two remaining terms for the first and the greater for the third. But if less be required, place the greater for the first and less for the third. Multiply the second and third terms together and divide the product by the first. . . ." The example is given. "If 9 yards of cloth cost £6 10s. what will 72 yards cost?" and the "proportion" is thus expressed:—

yds		£	s		yds
9	:	6	10	::	72

The school boy (Macaulay's "School Boy" at least) knows that a ratio is an abstract fraction, a proportion an equality of ratios; and it is as absurd to write "9 yds.: £6 10s." as $\frac{\text{"9 geese}}{\text{6½ dogs"}}$ The Rule given above was in my day in similar words but the number "of the same name with the number sought" was placed in the third place.

Alas "Proportion" has vanished from our arithmetics, eclipsed by the "unitary method," and now none so poor as to do it reverence. I well remember the delight with which I hailed my discovery—original as I fondly thought, the result not of theoretic deduction but of practical induction from scores of experiments—that if one number is any particular fraction of another, that other is the same fraction "upside down" of the first.

Practice has shared the fate of Proportion since we use dollars and cents and not pounds, shillings and pence. Tare and Tret, Cloff and Suttle are also things of the past.

Fractions, Vulgar and Decimal, next come in for treatment, Simple Interest (with Commission, Brokerage, Insurance and Discount) complicated by the currency in use— and then Exchange. In this the very curious fact is disclosed that the currencies of

the various States of the Union were not the same; e.g., £100 Halifax cy. were equal to £160 of New York cy. and North Carolina cy., to £150 of New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware and Maryland cy., to £120 of Virginia, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Connecticut and Massachusetts cy., but to only £93 6s. 8d. of Georgia and South Carolina cy. The same sum was equal to £125 of Jamaica cy., £97 10s. of Irish cy. and £90 sterling (the old par of exchange). The New York currency shilling, the "York shilling" or "Yorker," equal to the one eighth of a dollar, was a well-known measure of value in my boyhood; the coin representing it was the English sixpence, just as the English shilling passed for a "Quarter" or "two York Shillings."

(I produce to you this thick octavo of a few years before Strachan's time, the "American Calculator" which British merchants were obliged to use to evaluate the various American currencies.)

The proper form of Bills of Exchange is also given in this "Rule."

Compound Interest and Annuities I pass over, and come to Alligation, Medial and Alternate, of which the present generation is growing up in blank ignorance. Simple and Double Position ("Rule of False") are in the same case, and wisely so; no one can understand them unless he has a smattering of "Universal Arithmetic" as Newton calls Algebra; and then he knows better methods.

Square and Cube Root, Progression (Arithmetical and Geometrical) with a very fair amount of Mensuration and Land Surveying, close the arithmetic proper. A curious appendix follows—how to find the Golden Number, the Epact, the Moon's Age, the Cycle of the Sun, the Year of Indiction, the Julian Period, the Dominical or Sunday Letter, Easter Sunday—some of which looks to the Prayer Book and the rest is useless.

The proof reading of this little volume is not good. Its defects are explained by "the distance of the author." Cornwall was in those days more remote from Montreal than it is now from Chicago. Some of the spelling is accounted for in that way, as "Capitol" "Venitian" "Marriner" "Intejer"; but some seem to be simply the old form, e.g., "Cloathing," "Oisters," "Cyder," "Compleated," and the archaic "hath."

Occasionally the Scottish origin of the author peeps out; "the Curator of an Estate" is spoken of; the relative size of the Scotch and the English acre is given, and compared with that of the French Arpent, the last two of which were well known and in use in Upper Canada, the Scotch acre never.

Some long-forgotten, or at least long discontinued practices are referred to—the blacksmith makes nails, he charges for making a crane; cochineal was an article of commerce as it was before the era of aniline dyes and may be again; the farmer sowed hemp, the culture of which was fostered in the Province to supply the British navy, then still "Hearts of Oak," with cordage; the Commissary bought supplies; Cyder, Mead and Perry had to be measured; tea was worth 7/6 or 8/ ($1.50 or $1.60) per pound (green tea only $1.10); the list of household expenses contained, as of course, an item "paid the brewer"; the draper sometimes supplied "sticks of hair" (whatever that may be) and most shopkeepers' accounts against farmers were settled in whole or in part by potash, which formed a part of most shipments out of the country. What the old settler would have done without a market for potash is hard to say. The product of the burning of the forest saved many a man from ruin in early days. While the day of clearing *en bloc* was about over in my youth, and most of the clearing was for cordwood, I have seen many a pile of logs of splendid beech and maple blazing, turning perfectly good firewood into comparatively valueless ashes. The potash industry declined with the destruction of the forest and got its death blow from the results of scientific enquiry and the discovery of ready made alkali in large masses.

While the amount paid for beer for the household would shock our modern sense of propriety, what are we to say about the "Gentlemen of Quebec" who without a word of rebuke from the author went to a Horse Race, gained a prize of ten guineas, lost by betting against A £29 11s. 4d., won of B £39 12s. 8d., and lost to C £17 8s. 5d.?

He played a game for those in days to come.
To point no moral—but to frame a "sum."

Some of the problems—"questions" or "sums"—are rather quaintly expressed; for example, on page 191, question 41 reads:

"In the midst of a field of luxuriant grass
I rented an acre to tether my ass
Pray what length of tether that, feeding around,
The donkey may graze just his acre of ground?"

In our modern text books the question would be most prosaically put "What is the radius of a circle whose area is one acre?" —but the old schoolmaster, with all his siccity, knew the value of interesting language.

I well remember a problem put to myself: "A man had a gas well six hundred feet deep which he dug up and cut into post holes eight feet deep; how many post holes had he?" This "sum" excited my indignation then; and I find the relics of that indignation even now—because I solved it!

The Reverend John Strachan—afterwards to be the Right Reverend John Toronto—deserved well of his country when he wrote this arithmetic, like himself, practical, ignoring mere theory, accurate if dry, a creature of its time, useful rather than curious or ingenious.

The decision he mentions in his Preface to abandon the design he had formed and in part executed, to add the theory, was probably wise. If anyone has yet written a theoretical arithmetic for use in schools which is worth the paper on which it is printed, it has not been my good fortune to see it.

The author's views on higher education are elaborated in an octavo pamphlet of 45 pages; "A / Letter / to / The Reverend A. N. Bethune / Rector of Cobourg / on the / Management of Grammar Schools," / By John Strachan, D.D., LL.D., / Archdeacon of York /, Printed by R. Stanton / 1829," which is not common, but by no means so rare as the Arithmetic. The curriculum he suggests for the district schools is extensive; and it is interesting to compare with that the curriculum laid down by Dr. Egerton Ryerson on assuming the Presidency of Victoria College in 1842.

(See an octavo pamphlet of 34 pages, "Inaugural address / on the / Nature and Advantages / of an / English and Liberal Education / delivered by / The Rev. Egerton Ryerson / at the Opening of / Victoria College/ June 21, 1842 / with an account of the opening services, Course / of Studies, Terms, etc., in the College / "Seek first the goods of the mind, and the rest shall be supplied, or no way / prejudiced by their absence" Lord Bacon /

Toronto / By order of the Board of Trustees and Visitors / Printed at the Guardian Office, 9 Wellington Buildings / 1842." The pamphlet is not rare; my own copy is a presentation copy from Ryerson to the Hon. John Neilson, a well-known politician of the time.)

NOTE: It may not be without interest to note the price of certain commodities in the York (Toronto) and Kingston markets a little later. (I have no reliable figures for the earliest years of the century.)

James Strachan, of Aberdeen, a brother of the Reverend Author, not having seen him for some years, came to Upper Canada to visit him in 1819, and on his return to Scotland published * a small book: "A Visit / to the / Province of Upper Canada / in / 1819 / by / James Strachan / Aberdeen . . . / 1820." 8 vo., pp. viii + 9 to 224. The book did not recommend itself to the celebrated Robert Fleming Gourlay, who found in the one chapter devoted to him and his doings "32 falsehoods, 38 untruths, besides misrepresentations throughout." Certainly that particular chapter is not very credible or creditable—James Strachan shared the strong prejudice felt by his brother toward Gourlay, and the prejudice pervades and stains all their dealings with him.

But there is no reason to doubt the accuracy of the market prices of commodities quoted by James Strachan; I have compared them with figures from other sources of information, and there is no substantial difference (the prices are given in Halifax currency, £1 equals $4.00, 1s. equals 20c.); green tea per pound 5/0; souchon 7/6; hyson 8/9; loaf sugar 1/3; muscovado 0/11; maple 0/7½; candles 1/6; coffee 2/2; spirits per gal. 7/6; reduced rum 5/0; brandy 12/6; treacle 6/3; men's shoes per pair 7/6; women's do. 5/0; blankets, all sizes 20/0;—"*O fortunatos nimium sua si bona norint Agricolas*"—with potash and pearl ash in the Montreal market at £30 and £34 per ton respectively, and women's shoes a dollar a pair!

But every shield has two sides: beef was per pound 0/5; mutton 0/6; pork 0/7½; fowls per pair 3/0; cheese per pound 0/6; and butter 1/0; eggs per dozen 1/3; potatoes per bushel 2/0; oats 3/0; turnips 1/0; hay 40/0 per ton; and wood 10/0 per cord.

* At least the book was published in his name, but it is more than likely that it was the production of his more celebrated brother in Upper Canada.